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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000629

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER PSOCI IZ

SUBJECT: PRT DIYALA: DIYALA TAWAFUQ/IIP AIMS TO SHARE PC SPOILS

REF: A. BAGHDAD 628

1B. BAGHDAD 64

Classified By: PRT Leader George White for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) This is a PRT Diyala reporting cable.

12. (C) SUMMARY: PRT Diyala recently discussed formation of the new Provincial Council (PC) with members of the United Accord and Reform Front (Tawafuq) list, the leading vote getter in Diyala's PC elections. Tawafuq members asked for PRT technical assistance for the new PC, which would facilitate efforts to build and maintain a broadly inclusive provincial government. The party wants to allocates provincial government offices to all parties holding seats on the PC in order to promote local reconciliation and to curry favor with the Shi'a-led Government of Iraq (GOI). They also informed the PRT of Iraqi concerns that recent Shi'a protests about election results in the province may escalate into violence, and that GOI figures in Baghdad were influencing Diyala's PC formation. END SUMMARY.

13. (SBU) PRT Diyala hosted the leadership of the Diyala Tawafuq list on March 2 at the list's request. Tawafuq, whose major partner is the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), won a plurality of nine of the 29 seats in the recent PC elections, and is now poised to lead the transfer of power from a Shi'a-Arab led to a Sunni-Arab led provincial government. Participants in the meeting included Hamdi Hasun Al Mehdi, a representative of the IIP in Diyala and a member of the President's Council in Baghdad; current Assistant Governor Hafiz Abdul-Azzeez Jum'a Saleh al-Jubouri; and Omar al Farook Muhammad Mahmud, a newly elected PC member and possible gubernatorial candidate. The meeting focused both on the post-elections political maneuvering to form a new provincial government and on their concern that PM Maliki's security apparatus might arrest the top leaders of the IIP to prevent them from forming a new provincial government (ref A).

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POST ELECTION POLITICAL MANEUVERING  
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14. (C) Rather than forming a narrow coalition, Tawafuq hopes to form a unified coalition by allocating the provincial government's offices among each list that won a PC seat. They propose that Tawafuq would take the Governorship; the KA the Provincial Council Chair; and the Iraqi National Project Gathering (INPG) and the Shi'a parties the two Deputy Governorships. Hamdi is particularly concerned that Da'wa be represented among the Shi'a parties in order to maintain good ties with the Maliki GOI. According to Hamdi, the INPG had proposed a narrow "Sunni (Arab)" coalition with Tawafuq, but Tawafuq had rejected the idea, preferring to try to include all parties.

15. (C) Hamdi said the major hurdle Tawafuq faces is that both the INPG and the KA want the PC Chairmanship. He relayed that within the KA list, both the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) party and the Kurdistan Democratic Party

(KDP) want the PC Chairman position (an internal matter that should not affect broader negotiations). More broadly, he noted a challenge in convincing all parties to accept the distribution. Hamdi requested PRT technical assistance for the new PC to help parties to work together and to provide training.

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SHI'A DEMONSTRATIONS PROTESTING ELECTION RESULTS IN DIYALA  
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¶ 6. (C) Responding to reports of March 1 demonstrations in Diyala's Khalis and Muqdadiah districts by Shi'a groups unhappy with the PC election results, Hamdi believed that the Shi'a do in fact appear to be underrepresented. However, he maintained that the Shi'a underrepresentation was not due to voting irregularities, but because their vote was divided among several parties--some of which failed to reach the threshold needed to seat a PC member. He added that Sunni Arabs should have received more seats than they did since they comprise a majority of Diyala's population.

¶ 7. (C) Hamdi thought of the demonstrations as a natural part of the democratic process, but also reported a worrisome meeting with Sa'ad Chaloub, the Prime Minister's Representative in Diyala. Sa'ad warned Hamdi that Shi'a elements might go beyond demonstrations to taking violent action. Hamdi told us he responded that cooperation in forming the government would be a better option, and that those engaging in violence would only hurt their own cause.

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COMMENT  
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¶ 8. (C) Tawafug's awareness of the GOI's power is likely the driving force behind their desire not to exclude any political factions from the provincial government: Hamdi informed us that negotiations to allocate PC offices are taking place both in Diyala and in Baghdad. Sunni Arab leaders in Diyala feel that the GOI is intentionally targeting them to cripple Sunni Arab political power (reftels). Tawafug's inclusiveness is a positive response to what may be outside meddling, and offers a promising way to assist in the transfer of power from a Shi'a Arab-led provincial government to the new Sunni Arab-led one. It could serve as a model for political reconciliation in other provinces. END COMMENT.

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